THE MINE RAT'S INSTINCT

When They Leave the Collieries it is a Never Failing Sign of Danger.

Robbing Pillars" in the Anthracite Mines and the Disasters Which Follow.

Peculiarities of the Rodent Who While the Miners Detest They Like to See Around.

As the work of mining advances through the anthracite coal fields of northeastern Pennsylvania, says a correspondent of the New York Times, the fall of roof becomes more frequent, more extensive, and more fatal. The great corporations take out their black jewels from the perilous depths, regardless of life above or below the rock that underlies the shallow surface of earth and forms the superincumbent shell under which the concentrated sunlight of ages is stored with all the subtle force that gives impulse in various ways to our civilization,

When all the coal that can be removed in ordinary course of mining has been taken the out of a colliery the work of removing the anthracite supports that were left to keep

anthracite supports that were left to keep up the roof, and that form about one-fourth of the vein, takes place. It is called "robbing the pillars," although it is a work that is always carried on by the owners. This is a hazardous business and is frequently attended by great loss of life.

The caving in of several acres of roof in the mines near Wilkesbarre recently shook that entire neighborhood and made the diligent special correspondents imagine that Dame Nature had been getting up a little home-made earthquake for their special benefit. Of course they shared the information with the outside world, as they usually do, and the Wyoming valley enjoyed one day's reputation as an earthquake center. There was a great fall of roof in one of the principal mines at Archibald, in the northern portion of the Lackswanna Valley, recently. The men had been "robbing sillars" and head reade-considerable head. principal mines at Archibald, in the northern portion of the Lackawanna Valley, recently. The men had been "robbing pillars" and had made considerable headway. Everything looked all right Saturday evening when they quit work, but when they returned to the mine on Monday morning they found that acres of the roof had fallen in, and a great field of rock from three to nine feet in thickness, lay on the floor of the colliery after having ground several stout anthracite pillars to powder. The scene presented to the miners as they looked in amazement at the weird aspect of their former workshop was awe-inspiring, but they were powerless to restore anything like order in that tremendous chaos, and their work was finished so far as that place was concerned. They congratulated themselves on the fact that the great rock, which must have weighed millions of tons, had fallen on Sunday when they were absent from the mine.

The Times correspondent talked, soon after the resident was a finished as a finished, soon after the resident with a finish as a finished, soon after the resident with a finish and the resident with a finish as a finished, soon after the resident with a finish and the resident with a finish as a finished, soon after the resident with a finish and the resident with a finish an

fallen on Sunday when they were absent from the mine.

The Times correspondent talked, soon after the accident, with an intelligent miner employed at that place, and learned from him that in case of falling roof, when the collapse does not extend over a wide area, attentive men usually have some warning a short time in advance of the fall, as the roof invariably cracks under the great strain to which it is subjected, and makes a succession of loud reports like pistol shots. He did not think such warnings were given before the Archbald mine caved in in time to permit the workmen to save themselves, as the fall of rock extended over several acres. His own suspicions were aroused, he said, a few days before the accident occurred by the queer conduct of the mine rats. They were very numerous in the Archibald mine, and for several days previous to the falling and for several days previous to the falling of the roof they were seen quitting the place in swarms. This the old miners considered a bad omen, because they had learned from experience and tradition that when rats leave a mine, it is a certain sign that an unusual accident is about to occur.

The belief in this particular notion is quite general throughout the coal fields, and repulsive as the great, fierce mine rat is to the miner, he likes to see it at ease in the dismal depths where death is of such fre-quent occurrence. There is good reason for associating the disappearance of the rat from a colliery with an impending disaster. The rat is a sensitive thing; it makes its resting place in the nooks and crannies of the mine, and it feels the first slow move-ment of the crumbling rocks as they begin to squeeze and settle and shape themselves for the disaster which culminates in the fall for the disaster which culminates in the fall of the roof. The wary rat is first to feel the commotion. He is dazed by the grinding motion of the rocks, he undoubtedly thinks they have suddenly become imbued with life, and he flees with his fellows, panic-stricken from the place.

The motion of the great moving mass has thus far been too delicate to make itself manifest to the miner, and when he sees the rats rushing off and the fall of roof asserts itself soon after with disastrons force, he is disposed to give the vigilant rodents more credit than they are really entitled to.

credit than they are really entitled to.
The rats become very bold in the mines.
They will frequently take a piece of bread or
meat from a miner's hand and follow him
about for food. A miner, who is not easily
frightened, told me the other day that he has often been scared by mine rats. On one occasion he had a considerable distance to go and he had to pass through a portion of an old working. There he encountered about a dozen rats. They were large and fierce, and were not a bit startled by his presence. On the contrary, they soon showed that they rather liked his company. His oil was burning low in his lawn and showed that they rather liked his company. His oil was burning low in his lamp and smelled very strong, and it was evident that it had a great attraction for the hungry rats. They followed close at his heels, and whenever he hastened his speed they did the same. His only hope was in keeping the tiny flame in his lamp glowing, and he felt that if it was extinguised by any mishap they would attack him at once. It was with unspeakable relief that he reached his destination before the last faint flicker of his lamp died out.

The drippings of the oil cans from which the miners supply their lamps have a great

The drippings of the oil cans from which the miners supply their lamps have a great fascination for the rats, and sometimes they lose their lives for it. The same miner wao had the adventure just narrated told the writer that only a few months ago a two-gallon oil can became so literally jammed with dead rats that it was with considerable difficulty they could be pulled out. The cover had been left off, and in their eagerness to get at the oil the rats forced themselves one by one through the narrow neck of the can, from which they were afterward unable to extricate themselves. Sometimes the wily rat will help

were afterward unable to extricate themselves. Sometimes the wily rat will help himself by inscrting his long tail into the oil can and saturating it with the contents. This operation, oft-repeated, will soon result in an empty can and a very happy rat. The first great fall of roof that ever c-curred in this region was at Carbondale about thirty-five or forty years ago. The entire side of the mountain fell in and several lives were lost. Several days before the disaster the people of the neighborhood were astonished to see swarms of rats leaving the mine. This fact was recalled after the great disaster occurred, and the rats were credited with extraordinary foresight. No doubt they felt the first movements of the collapsing rocks, and were driven forth in collapsing rocks, and were driven forth in fear. Ever since then if rats are seen leaving a mine anywhere in this section it is considered a sure sign that it is no longer safe for men to work there. It will be seen from this that, unpleasant as the mine rat

an indicator of accidents, especially when the deadly roof, which sometimes plays such sad havoc, is about to collapse.

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St. [Paul, Atlantic ex., St. Paul and east. 11:35 a Montana, Pacific ex., Butte and south. 4:00 p Helena and Butte ex., Butte and south. 8:15 a Marysville ex. 4:10[...410]. Marysville ex. 7;30 a st. Paul, Atlantic ex. Butte and south. [11:25]a. dontana, Pacific ex.,St. Paul and east. 3:45 p. i lelena and Butte ex., Butte and south. 6:30 p. i

Marysville ex... Marysville ex...

Northern Pacific.			
ARRIVE.			
Through westbound Through eastbound Butte, Missoula and Helena ex. Marysville passenger Rimini accom., Mon., Wed. and Fri Wickes and Boulder passenger Marysville accommodation	8:40 5:00 10:05	p. a. p. a.	1
DEPART.			
Through westbound. Through eastbound. Helena, Missoula and Butte ex	7:35]	D.	1

Marysville passenger Rimini accom, Mon. Wed. and Fri. Wickes and Boulder passenger. Marysville accommodation. Union Pacific,

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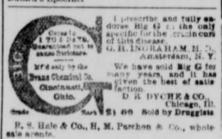
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